STARRING IN THIS ISSUE-- The Joker!
NO. 294 DEC.
30430
35¢
BAT MAN
HA HA HA HA HA HA
SO LONG, BATMAN! THIS TIME I REALLY RUBBED YOU OUT!
WHAT A JOKE! EVEN IN DEATH--
--YOUR SECRET IDENTITY IS STILL A SECRET!
HA HA HA HA
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ADVERTISEMENT

THE PENGUIN in "The CUCKOO CUCKOOS"

FLY, YOU CUCKOOS, FLY! WITH MY UMBRELLA DIRECTING YOU TO ROB, PILLAGE, PECK AND ANNOY, WE'LL SOON HAVE 'EM ALL CUCKOO. THEN I'LL TAKE OVER THE WHOLE CITY.
HSS!!
HSSSS!!!
CUCKOO
CUCKOO
CUCKOO

WELL, PENGUIN, I GUESS WE'LL FEATHER OUR NESTS AFTER THIS.
WE? WHAT WE? THE PENGUIN IS NEVER A "WE." IT IS I WHO AM THE MASTERMIND, NOT YOU, BIRDBRAIN. ERGO, IT IS I WHO SHALL PROFIT MOST HANDSOMELY FROM THIS CAPER. IF YOU THINK YOU'RE ON THE SAME PLANE AS ME, YOU MUST BE A CUCKOO, CUCKOO.

THERE'S GOTTA BE A WAY TO STOP THESE VULTURES. I KNOW--
HEY, YOU BIRDS!! LOOK! DELICIOUS HOSTESS® FRUIT PIES...
NO! NO!! NOT REAL FRUIT FILLING!! TENDER, LIGHT CRUST!! LUSCIOUS APPLE AND CHERRY! MY CLOCKS ARE NOT THAT CUCKOO THAT THEY'D PASS UP DELICIOUS HOSTESS FRUIT PIES!
THAT'S RIGHT! THEY'D EVEN DESERT YOU, PENGUIN, FOR LAW, ORDER, APPLE AND CHERRY!
FRUIT PIE

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CREATED BY BOB KANE
ORPHANED AS A CHILD WHEN HIS PARENTS WERE KILLED BEFORE HIS EYES, BRUCE WAYNE TRAINED HIMSELF TO WAGE RELENTLESS WAR AGAINST CRIME AS THE DREAD AVENGER OF THE NIGHT...
THE BATMAN
THIS IS HOW YOU END, BATMAN-- SURROUNDED BY DEATH!
HAHAHAHAHAHAHA
THERE IS STILL NO ANSWER TO THE QUESTION HEARD 'ROUND THE GLOBE -- WHERE WERE YOU ON THE NIGHT BATMAN WAS KILLED? FROM THE HELLPITS OF THE UNDERWORLD--FROM THE FRENZIED, THE BRAINSICK, THE RABID-- THE HIGHEST AND THE MIGHTIEST OF CRIME HAVE COME WITH THEIR CLAIMS FOR GLORY-- AND FAILED! NOW IT'S THE GRINNING GARGOYLE'S TURN-- THE HARLEQUIN OF HATE -- WHO TELLS IT AS IT IS IN THE...
"TESTIMONY OF THE JOKER!"
STORY: DAVID V. REED
COLOR: JERRY SERPE
LETTERING: BEN ODA
EDITOR: JULIUS SCHWARTZ
ART: JOHN CALNAN & TEX BLAISDELL
S-2652

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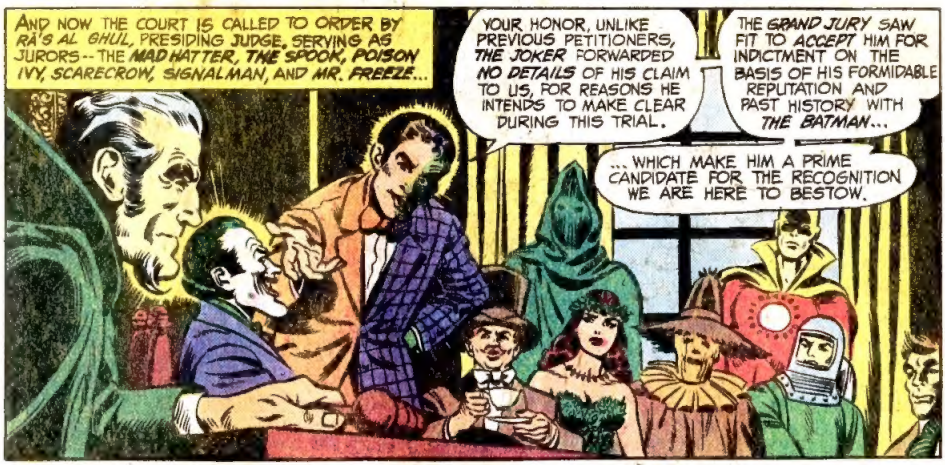
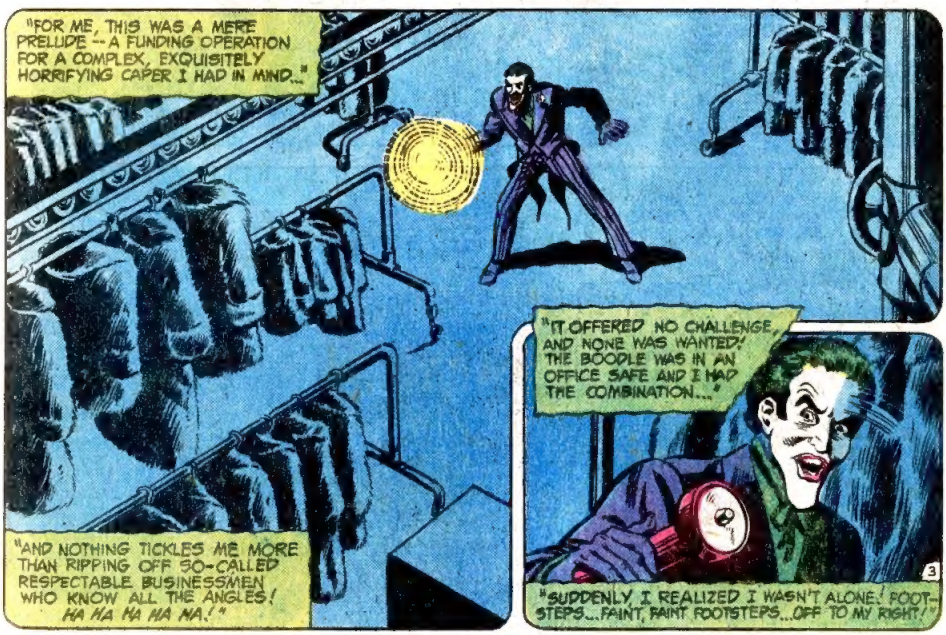
WE ARE PRESENT AT SESSION FOUR, AS THE HUSH TRIBUNAL OF CRIME RESUMES ITS EXTRAORDINARY SERIES OF TRIALS TO ESTABLISH THE IDENTITY OF THE BATMAN'S KILLER!
WIDELY HERALDED THROUGHOUT THE UNDERWORLD, THEIR PROMISE OF SENSATIONAL DISCLOSURES HAS BEEN MORE THAN FULFILLED!
HERE, IN THE REMOTE, GUARDED CONFINES OF A COUNTRY ESTATE, THE RANKING PEERS OF OUTLAWRY AVIDLY DISCUSS THE PROSPECTS OF THE NEXT CLAIMANT--

--THE JOKER! PERENNIAL FUGITIVE FROM THE LOONY BIN -- THE MANIACAL MAESTRO OF MIRTH AND MAYHEM!
YOU SEEM OVERLY CONFIDENT, JOKER! AREN'T YOU WORRIED BY WHAT HAPPENED HERE TO THE CATWOMAN -- LUTHOR -- THE RIDDLER?*
ME WORRIED, CAVALIER? IT IS TO LAUGH! HA HA HA HA!
* THREE PREVIOUS ISSUES OF BATMAN! -- JULIE

BUT TONIGHT, THE CLOWN PRINCE OF CRIME IS UP AGAINST THE DREAD AND DAZZLING TWO-FACE -- HARVEY DENT, TURNCOAT D.A. -- WHOSE VENOMOUS DISPLAY OF FORENSIC VIRTUOSITY HAS EARNED HIM THE WHISPERED SOBRIQUET OF GRAND INQUISITOR!

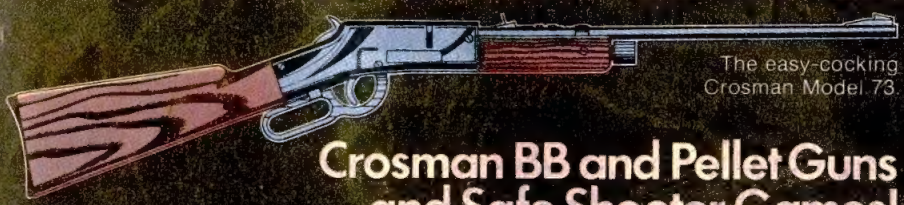

AND NOW THE COURT IS CALLED TO ORDER BY RA'S AL GHUL, PRESIDING JUDGE. SERVING AS JURORS -- THE MAD HATTER, THE SPOOK, POISON IVY, SCARECROW, SIGNALMAN, AND MR. FREEZE...
YOUR HONOR, UNLIKE PREVIOUS PETITIONERS, THE JOKER FORWARDED NO DETAILS OF HIS CLAIM TO US, FOR REASONS HE INTENDS TO MAKE CLEAR DURING THIS TRIAL.
THE GRAND JURY SAW FIT TO ACCEPT HIM FOR INDICTMENT ON THE BASIS OF HIS FORMIDABLE REPUTATION AND PAST HISTORY WITH THE BATMAN...
...WHICH MAKE HIM A PRIME CANDIDATE FOR THE RECOGNITION WE ARE HERE TO BESTOW.

JOKER, WHERE WERE YOU ON THE NIGHT BATMAN WAS KILLED?
THE ANSWER TO THAT IS -- EXACTLY WHERE I WAS THE NIGHT BEFORE THE BATMAN WAS KILLED!
--IN THE WAREHOUSE BUILDING OF THE CHATEAU BONHEUR FUR COMPANY, WHERE $500,000 IN SECRET REVENUE HAD BEEN STASHED TO AWAIT SHIPMENT TO SWISS BANKS!


"FOR ME, THIS WAS A MERE PRELUDE -- A FUNDING OPERATION FOR A COMPLEX, EXQUISITELY HORRIFYING CAPER I HAD IN MIND..."
"AND NOTHING TICKLES ME MORE THAN RIPPING OFF SO-CALLED RESPECTABLE BUSINESSMEN WHO KNOW ALL THE ANGLES! HA HA HA HA HA!"
"IT OFFERED NO CHALLENGE, AND NONE WAS WANTED! THE BOODLE WAS IN AN OFFICE SAFE AND I HAD THE COMBINATION..."
"SUDDENLY I REALIZED I WASN'T ALONE! FOOT-STEPS...FAINT, FAINT FOOTSTEPS...OFF TO MY RIGHT!"
3

"THERE HE WAS--A NICKEL-AND-DIME SLOBFOOT--SNAGGING SOME SABLES..."
"...AND MAYBE SCUTTLING MY MISSION IN THE PROCESS BY CLUMSILY SETTING OFF AN ALARM!"
"--MAYBE? THERE WAS NO MAYBE ABOUT IT! FOR, ALL OF A SUDDEN--"
B-BATMAN!
"HE'D BROADCAST AN INVITATION--AND YOUR NEMESIS AND MINE HAD COME TO THE PARTY!"
"THE STUPE COULD THINK OF NOTHING BETTER THAN TO PULL A SLASHER--"
SLISH
"--WITH PREDICTABLE RESULTS!"
"RIGHT THEN AND THERE, I HAD MY CHANCE--AND THE MEANS--TO PUT THEM BOTH AWAY--AN AIR-GUN WITH BARBED PELLETS THAT INSTANTLY LOWERED THE BLOOD PRESSURE TO ZILCH AND ZONK-OUT!"
CLICK
"--IF ONLY I HADN'T NEGLECTED TO LOAD IT!"
"SO THERE WASN'T A THING I COULD DO BUT CONTINUE TO LIE DOGGO AND WATCH--FROM A RINGSIDE SEAT!"
4
CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

Indoor BB gun FUN! It's a whole new GAME!



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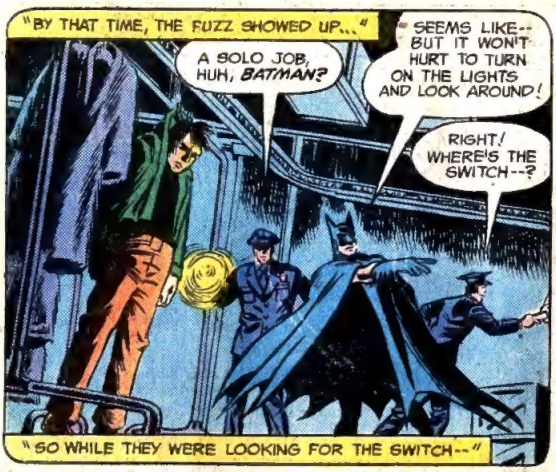
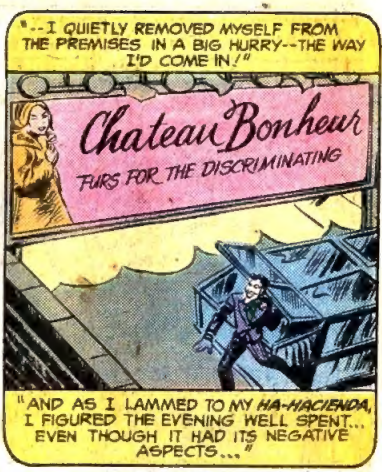
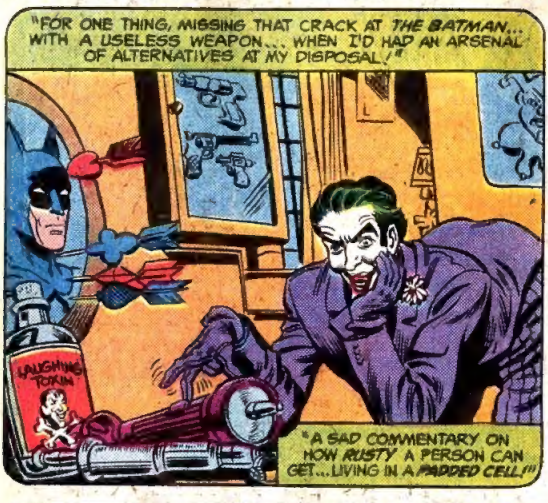
"...AND THEN, TO A PROFOUND, CONCENTRATED STUDY OF THE BATMAN'S MOVES--"
"--HIS LIGHTNING REFLEXES--"
"--THE INSTINCTIVE COUNTERS--"
"IT WAS A SEMINAR IN SLUGGING--AND I PAID CLOSE ATTENTION!"
THOONK
"THE END WAS CLASSICAL! HOW WELL I REMEMBERED THAT LEFT HOOK COMING OFF A JAB!"
"THE SLUMBERLAND SPECIAL!"
5

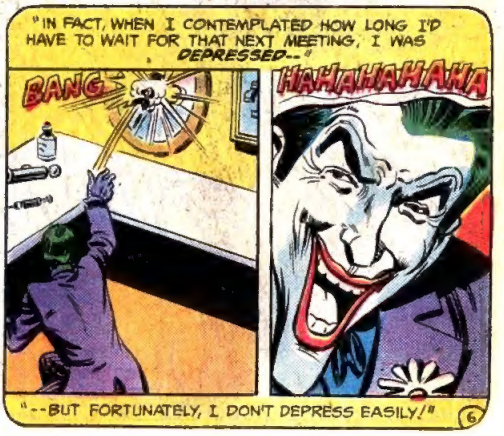

"BY THAT TIME, THE FUZZ SHOWED UP..."
A SOLO JOB, HUH, BATMAN?
"SEEMS LIKE--BUT IT WON'T HURT TO TURN ON THE LIGHTS AND LOOK AROUND!
RIGHT! WHERE'S THE SWITCH--?
"SO WHILE THEY WERE LOOKING FOR THE SWITCH--"


"--I QUIETLY REMOVED MYSELF FROM THE PREMISES IN A BIG HURRY--THE WAY I'D COME IN!"
Chateau Bonheur
FURS FOR THE DISCRIMINATING
"AND AS I LAMMED TO MY HA-HACIENDA, I FIGURED THE EVENING WELL SPENT... EVEN THOUGH IT HAD ITS NEGATIVE ASPECTS..."


"FOR ONE THING, MISSING THAT CRACK AT THE BATMAN... WITH A USELESS WEAPON... WHEN I'D HAD AN ARSENAL OF ALTERNATIVES AT MY DISPOSAL!"
LAUGHING TOXIN
"A SAD COMMENTARY ON HOW RUSTY A PERSON CAN GET...LIVING IN A PADDED CELL!"

"MOREOVER, I HADN'T COPPED THE LOOT--WHICH MEANT I'D HAVE TO MAKE ANOTHER TRIP THE NEXT NIGHT..."
SNIK
"BUT ON THE POSITIVE SIDE--"

"--I'D LEARNED SOME THINGS ABOUT THE BATMAN'S RHYTHMS AND RESPONSES I HADN'T BEEN AWARE OF--"
CLACK!
"--WHICH WOULD ADD SPICE AND EXCITEMENT TO OUR NEXT MEETING...WHEN MY COMING CAPER BURST INTO BLOOM!"


"IN FACT, WHEN I CONTEMPLATED HOW LONG I'D HAVE TO WAIT FOR THAT NEXT MEETING, I WAS DEPRESSED--"
BANG
HAHAHAHAHA
"--BUT FORTUNATELY, I DON'T DEPRESS EASILY!"

"THE FOLLOWING NIGHT..."
"MY CIRCUIT-BYPASS ON THE SKYLIGHT ALARM WAS STILL IN PLACE... JUST AS I'D LEFT IT--"
"OBVIOUSLY, THAT CLUNK'S INEPT BREAK-IN THE NIGHT BEFORE, VIA THE FIRE ESCAPE, HAD CONVINCED THEM THEIR SYSTEM WAS FAULTLESS!"
"IT WAS SO EASY THAT, POSSIBLY, I WAS A BIT CARELESS... MOVING TOO FAST... BECAUSE--"
INCREDIBLE! UTTERLY... INCREDIBLE!
"--JUST AS I REACHED THE SPOT WHERE I'D BEEN STYMIED THE NIGHT BEFORE, THERE HE WAS--"
"--THE BATMAN! BUT THE STRANGEST PART OF IT WAS--HE SEEMED EVEN MORE ASTONISHED TO SEE ME!"
GASP! THE JOKER!
"--BUT THAT WAS AS FAR AS HE GOT..."
"HE STOOD THERE... MOTIONLESS... ROOTED--THEN HE STARTED TO SAY, 'LISTEN, JOKER'--"
ARRRGGGHHH!
I'M LISTENING! AND I LIKE WHAT I HEAR! HAHAHA!
"FOR OPENERS, I POPPED HIM WITH A BLINDING DOSE OF DISSOLVING FLUID!"
"THEN--AS HE DOUBLED UP--TRYING TO SHIELD HIMSELF..."
"...DOWN HE WENT--LIKE A DEAD WEIGHT!"
7

"IT WAS LIKE A DREAM--"
"NO MATTER WHAT HE TRIED-- I COULD DO NO WRONG!"
"WITH HIS VISION BLURRED, MOST OF HIS BLOWS MISSED--"
"AND THE FEW THAT LANDED WERE MEANINGLESS!"
"AND STILL HE KEPT COMING ON--AND ON--AND ON--"

CONTINUED ON 3RD PAGE FOLLOWING

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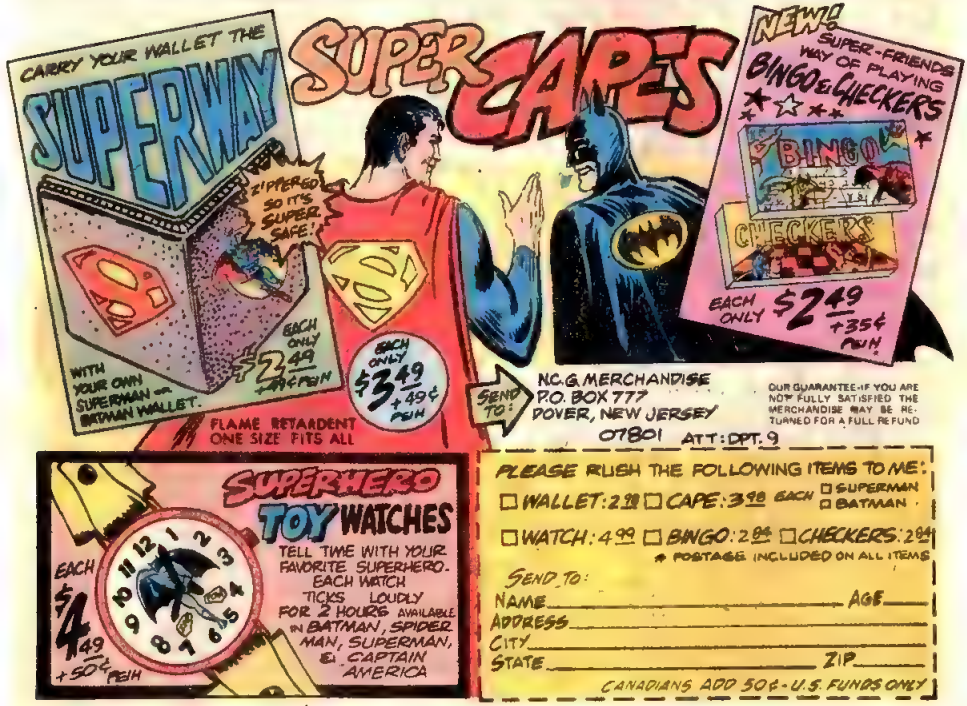
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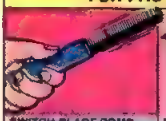

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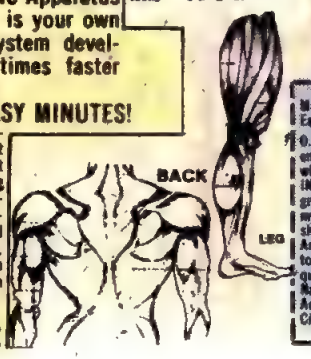

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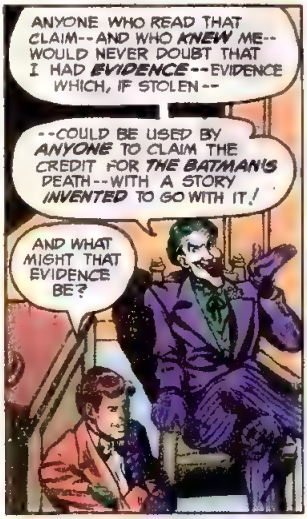
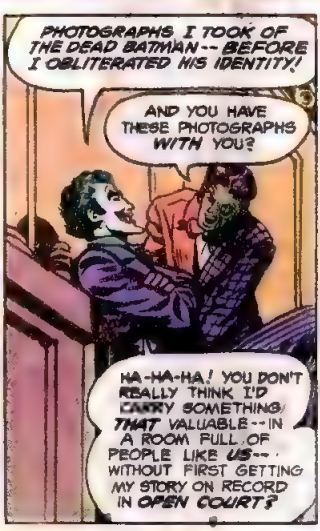
"IN ALL OUR YEARS OF WARFARE, I'D SEVERAL TIMES HAD CHANCES TO KILL HIM--BUT LET HIM SURVIVE--TO PRESERVE MY MOST EXHILARATING OPPONENT--MY PARTNER IN FUN AND GAMES!"
"I HADN'T MEANT IT--BUT I DIDN'T SHED ANY TEARS OVER IT, EITHER!"
"THERE WAS STILL SOME HUMOR LEFT TO BE WRENCHED FROM THIS FINAL EPISODE--A GUESSING GAME FOR THE POLICE!--WHETHER THEY ACTUALLY KNEW WHO THE BATMAN WAS OR NOT!"
"I BLOTTED HIM OUT COMPLETELY--HIS FEATURES, HIS FINGERPRINTS--EVERY MEANS OF IDENTIFICATION--AND LEFT HIM THERE."
THEN I EMPTIED THE SAFE... WENT HOME... AND WAITED FOR THE FUN TO BEGIN!
BUT NOTHING HAPPENED! NOT A WORD IN PRINT OR ON THE AIR--NOTHING! THEY WERE KEEPING IT QUIET--EVIDENTLY AFRAID TO LET THE NEWS OUT!
BUT, ONE WAY OR ANOTHER, IT GRAPEVINED THROUGH THE UNDERWORLD! SUDDENLY, EVERYBODY EVERYWHERE WAS CLAIMING THE CREDIT--LEADING INEVITABLY TO THESE TRIALS--WHICH I HAVE NOW BROUGHT TO THEIR INEVITABLE END! HAHAHA!
A MOST COMPELLING STORY... BUT BECAUSE OF YOUR FAILURE TO SUBMIT IT IN ADVANCE, YOU DENIED US THE OPPORTUNITY TO INVESTIGATE AND POSSIBLY REFUTE IT!
WHERE'S YOUR PROOF?
9

YOU KNOW THE JOKER BETTER THAN THAT, TWO-FACE! YOU KNOW I'D NEVER COME HERE WITHOUT SOMETHING TANGIBLE TO BACK UP MY WORDS!
I DO HAVE PROOF--AND THAT'S EXACTLY WHY I DIDN'T SUBMIT A WRITTEN CLAIM!


ANYONE WHO READ THAT CLAIM--AND WHO KNEW ME--WOULD NEVER DOUBT THAT I HAD EVIDENCE--EVIDENCE WHICH, IF STOLEN--
--COULD BE USED BY ANYONE TO CLAIM THE CREDIT FOR THE BATMAN'S DEATH--WITH A STORY INVENTED TO GO WITH IT!
AND WHAT MIGHT THAT EVIDENCE BE?


PHOTOGRAPHS I TOOK OF THE DEAD BATMAN--BEFORE I OBLITERATED HIS IDENTITY!
AND YOU HAVE THESE PHOTOGRAPHS WITH YOU?
HA-HA-HA! YOU DON'T REALLY THINK I'D CARRY SOMETHING THAT VALUABLE--IN A ROOM FULL OF PEOPLE LIKE US--WITHOUT FIRST GETTING MY STORY ON RECORD IN OPEN COURT?

YOUR HONOR, I ASK THE COURT TO DECLARE A RECESS UNTIL THE JOKER RETURNS WITH HIS PROOF!
GRANTED! THIS COURT STANDS IN RECESS FOR ONE HOUR!

MOMENTS LATER, AS TWO-FACE SURREPTITIOUSLY LEAVES THE MANSION AND STARTS RUNNING THROUGH THE DARK, SURROUNDING FIELDS--AN ASTOUNDING METAMORPHOSIS UNFOLDS!...
...IT BEGINS WITH HIM SAVAGELY RIPPING AWAY AT HIS SCARRED AND TWISTED VISAGE--

CONTINUED ON 5TH PAGE FOLLOWING

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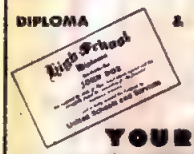

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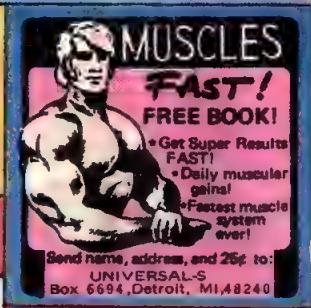

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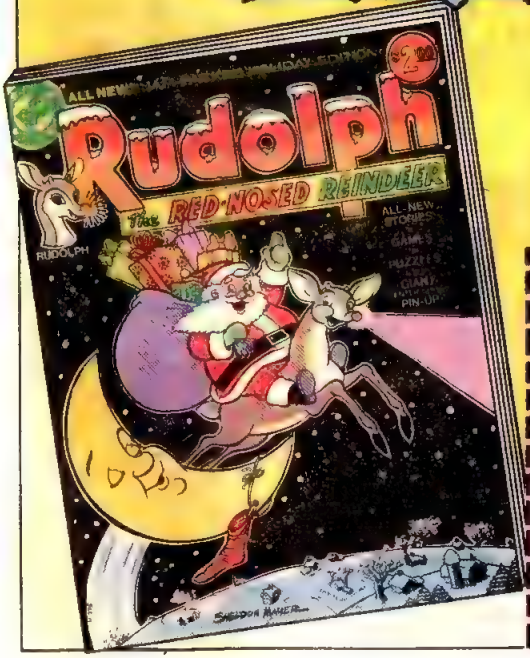

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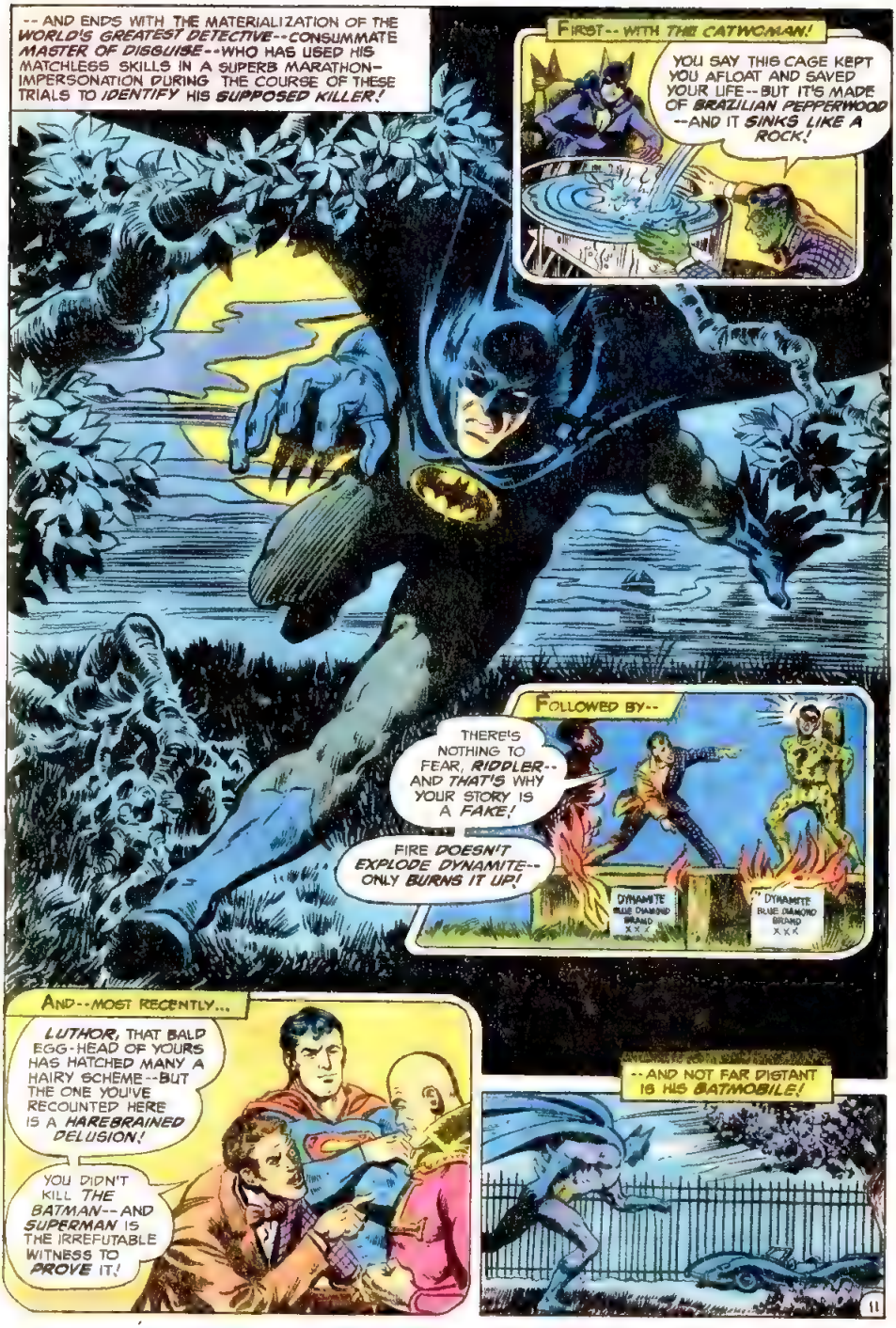
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FIRST--WITH THE CATWOMAN!
YOU SAY THIS CAGE KEPT YOU AFLOAT AND SAVED YOUR LIFE--BUT IT'S MADE OF BRAZILIAN PEPPERWOOD --AND IT SINKS LIKE A ROCK!
FOLLOWED BY--
THERE'S NOTHING TO FEAR, RIDDLER-- AND THAT'S WHY YOUR STORY IS A FAKE!
FIRE DOESN'T EXPLODE DYNAMITE-- ONLY BURNS IT UP!
DYNAMITE BLUE DIAMOND BRAND XXX
DYNAMITE BLUE DIAMOND BRAND XXX
AND--MOST RECENTLY...
LUTHOR, THAT BALD EGG-HEAD OF YOURS HAS HATCHED MANY A HAIRY SCHEME--BUT THE ONE YOU'VE RECOUNTED HERE IS A HAREBRAINED DELUSION!
YOU DIDN'T KILL THE BATMAN--AND SUPERMAN IS THE IRREFUTABLE WITNESS TO PROVE IT!
--AND NOT FAR DISTANT IS HIS BATMOBILE!

TWENTY MINUTES LATER...
A BUG--PLANTED ON THE JOKER BY THE BATMAN AS THEY LEFT THE COURT-ROOM-- HAS LED HIM UNERRINGLY TO THE LAIR OF THE ACE OF KNAVES!
INSIDE HIS HA-HACIENDA, THE GLEEFUL JOKER GATHERS UP HIS "EVIDENCE"...
WAIT TILL THEY SEE THESE! THEY'LL JUMP OUT OF THEIR SKINS!
HIS EVIL HEART BRIMMING WITH JOY, HE PAUSES A MOMENT TO CHUCKLE REMINISCENTLY AS HE RELIVES THAT NIGHT OF TRIUMPH...
HAHAHAHA
WHEN SUDDENLY...
BAT-CUFFS--?!?
CLIK!
NO... NO! YOU'RE DEAD!
YOU OUGHT TO KNOW... YOU KILLED ME!
HA-HA-HA! I CAN'T BEGIN TO IMAGINE HOW YOU DID IT, BATMAN-- BUT THIS IS THE MOST FRIGHTFUL JOKE EVER PLAYED ON THE JOKER!
NOW--ONE GOOD JOKE DESERVES ANOTHER--!
12
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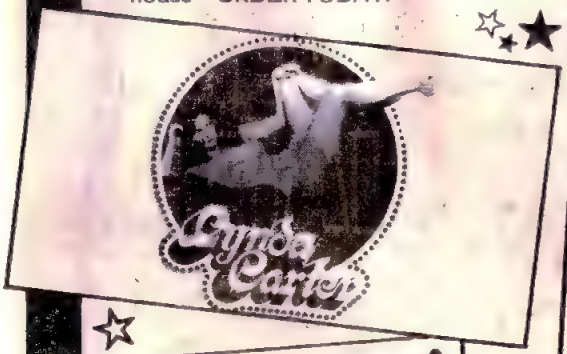

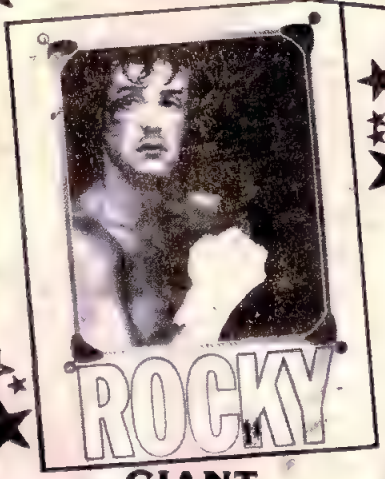

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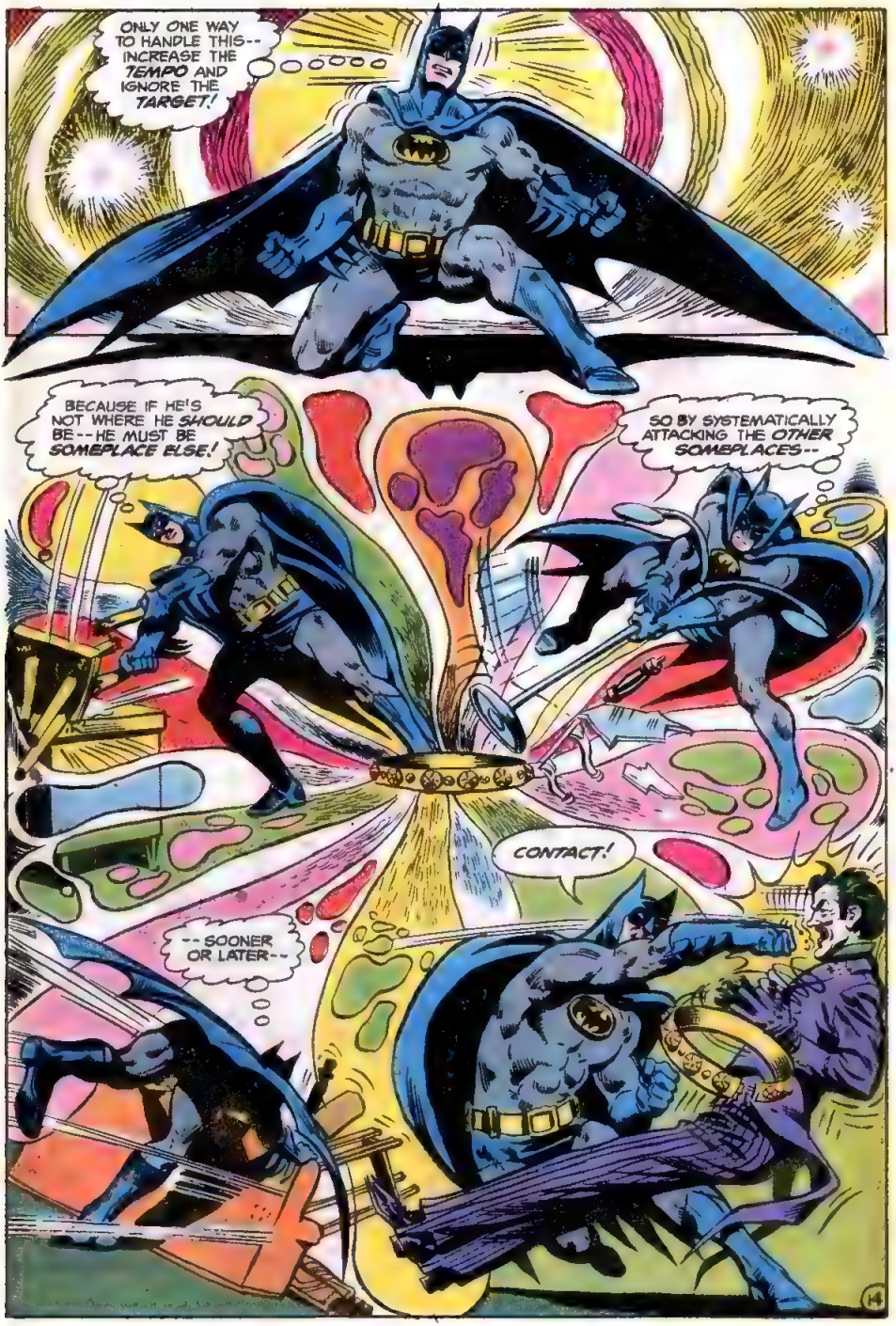
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AND NOW, YOU MURDEROUS MANIAC--YOU'RE GOING BACK TO YOUR REAL HOME!
SOME TIME LATER...AS THE ARKHAM ASYLUM FOR THE CRIMINALLY INSANE RECEIVES ITS MOST NOTABLE PERMANENT RESIDENT...
HOW DID THE BATMAN DO IT?
WHERE DID I GO WRONG?
SOMEBODY--TELL ME--WHAT HAPPENED?
IT'S DRIVING ME CRAZY!
GOTHAM POLICE
THEN--AS LUCK WOULD HAVE IT--A CHANCE ENCOUNTER...
TWO-FACE! THEY GOT YOU, TOO?
HUH? WHO GOT ME? WHAT ARE YOU TALKING ABOUT?
THE TRIALS! THE TRIALS! YOU WERE THERE!
ME--? WHAT TRIALS? I'VE BEEN GUARDED LIKE A BANK VAULT EVER SINCE THE TEEN TITANS CAPTURED ME!
WHAT'S MORE, THEY'VE HAD ME IN SOLITARY FOR TWO WEEKS--I DON'T KNOW WHY!
HA-HA-HA! I SEE IT ALL--A GIGANTIC CONSPIRACY! THE BATMAN SET IT UP! BEAUTIFUL! HA-HA-HA! WHAT A JOKE ON ME!
HE'S FLIPPING OUT! BETTER GET A DOCTOR!
AND SOON AFTER, IN THE HOSPITAL DIRECTOR'S OFFICE...A BRIEF, PUZZLED DISCUSSION PROVIDES THE POSTSCRIPT TO THE JOKER'S RETURN...
HOW'S THE JOKER, DOCTOR? HAS HE CALMED DOWN?
HARDLY...HE'S STILL LAUGHING LIKE A MAD HYENA!
DIRECTOR
PRIVATE
STILL HOMICIDAL?
NO, SIR--SUICIDAL!
EPILOGUE: TESTIMONY OF THE BATMAN
THE FOLLOWING EVENING...AT POLICE HQ....
AND THIS, COMMISSIONER, IS THE YOUNG MAN THE JOKER REALLY KILLED THAT NIGHT--JERRY RANDALL!
I IDENTIFIED HIM BY CHECKING THESE SHOTS THE JOKER TOOK OF HIM AGAINST THE PHOTO FILES OF MISSING PERSONS!
"I WENT TO WHERE HE'D LIVED, BEHIND A BOOKSHOP HE RAN ON FOURTH STREET..."
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15

"HE HAD A VERY PRIVATE, VERY SECRET HOBBY...WHICH HE DESCRIBED AT LENGTH IN A DIARY I FOUND.."
"HE WAS A GREAT ADMIRER OF MINE... COLLECTED PICTURES OF ME, STORIES, NEWS ITEMS! NOTHING WAS TOO TRIVIAL FOR HIM..."
BATMAN CUBS PENGUIN'S WINGS
BATMAN ROUTS GANG IN BANK STICKUP
"AND HE APPARENTLY WORRIED A LOT ABOUT THE BATMAN BEING IN CONSTANT JEOPARDY.."
"HE FEARED SOMEBODY WOULD DO ME IN EVENTUALLY... AND WHEN THAT HAPPENED, HE PLANNED TO TAKE MY PLACE AND CARRY ON MY WORK!"
SO HE TRIED TO MODEL HIMSELF AFTER ME IN EVERY WAY! WHENEVER HE'D READ SOMETHING I'D BEEN INVOLVED IN, HE'D ATTEMPT TO DUPLICATE MY PART IN IT.!
DUPLICATE IT? HOW--?
HE'D GO TO WHEREVER THE EPISODE HAD OCCURRED... CHANGE INTO A COPY OF MY COSTUME...SOMEHOW MANAGING TO GET INTO THE PLACE--EVADING GUARDS AND DETECTION SYSTEMS --
--AND THEN ACT OUT WHATEVER HE'D READ OR THEORIZED HAD HAPPENED!
HE MUST'VE BEEN PRETTY GOOD AT IT--
--BECAUSE HE NEVER GOT INTO ANY TROUBLE--UNTIL THAT NIGHT AT CHATEAU BONNEUR!
HIS LAST DIARY ENTRY WAS ABOUT THAT LOFT-WORKER I'D CAUGHT THERE THE NIGHT BEFORE. HE'D READ THE NEWS ACCOUNTS AND WAS GOING TO ACT THEM OUT!
"SO THERE HE WAS--DOING HIS ROUTINE-- WHEN THE JOKER RAN ACROSS HIM... AND KILLED HIM!"
"YOU REMEMBER, COMMISSIONER, THAT WHEN HE WAS FIRST FOUND, YOU THOUGHT IT MIGHT REALLY BE ME... UNTIL I RESPONDED TO YOUR HOT-LINE CALL!"
"WE DIDN'T HAVE CLUE-ONE ABOUT HIM, OR WHAT HE'D BEEN DOING THERE...BUT FROM HIS COSTUME, I GUESSED WHAT HAD PROBABLY HAPPENED..."
"IT WASN'T THE FIRST TIME I'D SEEN THAT SORT OF THING...THOUGH I PRAY IT WILL BE THE LAST!"

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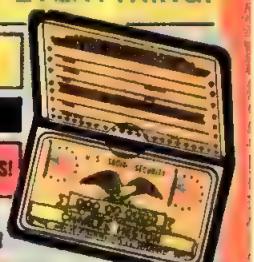

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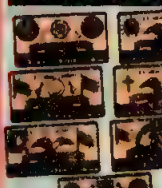

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I WAS SURE THE KILLER THOUGHT HE'D DESTROYED THE BATMAN--AND IF HE DIDN'T ADVERTISE IT, NEITHER WOULD HE LET ANYBODY ELSE CLAIM THE GLORY!
SO, THROUGH ABSOLUTELY TRUSTWORTHY UNDERWORLD CONNECTIONS, I PLANTED CONFLICTING RUMORS FROM GOTHAM TO FRISCO THAT I WAS DEAD... KILLED IN ACTION!
THEN, WITH TWO-FACE SAFE AT ARKHAM, I HAD HIM PUT IN SOLITARY--AND ASSUMED HIS IDENTITY!
I PRESENTED MYSELF TO "JAKE-THE-CLAW" VAN CLEEVE AND SOLD HIM ON THE TRIALS--WITH ME AS PROSECUTOR--AND WITH HIS PRESTIGE AMONG THE TOP DOGS OF CRIME, THE REST WAS EASY!
I KNEW THAT ONLY THE REAL KILLER WOULD KNOW THE TRUE DETAILS OF "MY" MURDER!
--AND THAT TURNED OUT TO BE THE JOKER!
WELL, SIR, THAT'S IT! I'LL BE GOING NOW... I HAVE A JOB TO DO...
AND SO, WITH THE END OF ONE OF THE BATMAN'S MOST BRILLIANT EXPLOITS, IT ISN'T LONG BEFORE THE UNDERWORLD GETS THE MESSAGE--AND THIS TIME IT IS NO RUMOR!
BATMAN IS ALIVE AND WELL--AND LIVING IN GOTHAM CITY
17

Dear Folks,

Well, the curtain went up last night on the first performance of "Skull Dugger's Killjoy Capers" (**BATMAN #290**) and as usual, your faithful reviewer for the **Gotham Herald** was there front-row center. I found this play an excellent example of a Julie Schwartz production.

Bruce Wayne has once again returned to the stage as one of our fair city's most leading citizens. He brings with him one of the most powerful interpretations of **The Batman** that I have ever seen. He exhibits a wide range of emotions from joy to fear, and makes you believe it. When he is on stage, Wayne is **The Batman**.

The villain of the piece, **Skull Dugger**, is well played by Cosmo Dugger. He provides the perfect counterpoint to Wayne's **Batman**. Where **Batman** seethes with repressed emotion, **Skull Dugger** calmly goes about his business. Where **Batman** takes a pure, natural joy in defeating his enemies, **Skull Dugger**'s joy is unnaturally produced. **Batman** is a professional. He knows the ins and outs of crime as well as he knows the back of his gloved hand. **Skull Dugger** is a talented amateur who actually makes less mistakes than his foe.

The rest of the cast is well-rounded, with even Commissioner Gordon appearing as himself.

David V. Reed, the playwright, has written about **The Batman** before, but this time he shows a side of the character we have rarely seen. We find that **Batman** actually takes a sadistic pleasure in taking his enemies in. This brings the character down to the level of the streets where he does so much of his fighting. If I were **Batman**, I'd talk to Reed about this image.

Mike Grell did a lavish job on directing the play, as well as in choreographing the fight scenes. He is only one in a long line of directors to handle **Batman** on stage, but continues to prove himself one of the best.

Even the stage crew proved to be extremely competent, from stage manager Vince Colletta to lights manager Jerry Serpe.

Overall, a fine show that deserves an absurdly long run!

D.B. WEBB
Route 1, Box 66A
Buena Vista, TN 38318

(While the *Gotham Herald* praised *BATMAN #290*, the *Mackinaw Monitor* panned it . . . as shown by the review below!—BR)

Dear Editor:

To tell the truth, I didn't care much for the two-part **Skull Dugger** caper. The plot left much to be desired; the coincidences were too contrived to be believed; and **Batman** spent most of the second part doing little more than reminding us how much pain he was in. **Skull** himself was nothing more than a standardized villain, though he could have been played as a sympathetic character. And **Batman's** brutality was a bit overdone. Shall I go on? No, I think you get the idea!

The most offensive of the aforementioned coincidences is the fact that **Skull Dugger's** device left a skull sign on its victims. A burn the size of a quarter would have been more suitable . . . and acceptable. But a mark that coincides with the nickname of the killer seems too far out of the realm of possibility. Similarly, there's the skull-burn on Dugger's head. It's a great touch of irony, but why should a fatal electrical charge leave such a mark?

As for **Dugger** himself, he could have been altered slightly into a very touching and emotional personality. As it was, Cosmo was a ruthless killer, concerned with his own well-being and not caring what the repercussions would be. If he had been horrified with the results, we might have had a completely different story. After the first murder, he might have considered giving it up. But after experiencing the joy he stole, he would reconsider—in effect, becoming a joy junkie whether he wanted to go on or not. That's he kind of story I would have liked to see . . . but you can't win 'em all!

MIKE WHITE
207 W. Fast
Mackinaw, IL 61755

(Two critics down, one to go! "Gruesome, shocking, incredible!" says the *Brentwood Bulletin* in the wrap-up which follows!—BR)

Dear Editor:

The cover of **BATMAN #290** looked like **The Twilight Zone** after a meal of hot peppers and insecticide—gruesome, shocking, incredible!

The conclusion to the saga of Cosmo (**Skull**) Dugger was an incredible tale, based on the logical but previously unexplored conclusion that **The Batman** never finds his life a drudge—he enjoys every minute of his chosen profession. We could always assume this, but here it is stated for the first time an avid detail.

David V. Reed can't possibly grow into the role of **Batman** scripter any further than he already has. This was not just a super-hero story—it was a true gothic horror, suitable for any medium. **BATMAN** is now monthly rapture for any serious student of his legend.

CHARLES D. BROWN
39 Stockton St.
Brentwood, NY 11717

(Next issue, the understudies step in for a special *BATMAN* production as Gerry Conway and newcomer Michael Golden present "The Case of the Houdini Whodunit" featuring the return of the *Gotham Mystery Analysts*! Be here the second week in October!—Bob Rozakis)

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VOLUME 77 ISSUE 36 | WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 5,1977 | BOB ROZAKIS: EDITOR | ANTHONY TOLLIN: PRODUCTION

FISHERMAN HOOKS AQUAMAN!

UNDERSEA FOES BATTLE NEAR MARIANAS TRENCH

(Pacific Ocean) *The Fisherman* had left *Aquaman* strapped to a lighthouse to die an agonizing death, but the King of the Sea was not to be beat. And now *Aquaman* tracks his deadly foe to the brink of the Marianas Trench, that deepest part of the ocean floor. It is here that the two antagonists battle for a sunken ship which is teetering on the edge, about to plummet into the Trench at any moment.

David Michelinie and Jim Aparo even have added a surprise foe in "Prey Perilous" so you won't want to miss *AQUAMAN #59*. And also in the issue, which goes on sale the week of September 12th, *Mera* battles for her life in the "Kingdom of Doom" in a Paul Kupperberg/Juan Ortiz/Vince Colletta collaboration.

Q: How do you receive advance issues of magazines?—Tony Murphy. *A:* Sometimes, when we are coming out with a new magazine, we send copies of the artwork to readers who are regular letter column contributors so that we will have some advance mail to print. But if you want to get your issues early, why not subscribe, using the coupon elsewhere in this issue.

Q: What did *Batman* do with the Bat-plane and the Bat-copter after he left Wayne Manor?—Pat Burger. *A:* Both are still in the Bat-Cave under the mansion, ready and waiting when the Caped Crusader needs them.

Q: Are there any more *Human Target* stories slated for *ACTION COMICS*? —Todd Stine. *A:* No, not at the present time.

Q: If the city of Kandor is from Krypton, why isn't *Superman* affected by the Kryptonite there?—Steven P. Haynie. *A:* Because there isn't any there. Kandor was stolen by *Brainiac* before Krypton exploded, so it was not affected by the blast which turned everything into deadly green K.

DIRECT CURRENTS

ON SALE THE WEEK OF SEPTEMBER 12th

METAL MEN #55—Green Lantern makes a guest appearance as the metal band faces "The Master Machinations of the Missile Men" by Gerry Conway and Joe Staton.

MR. MIRACLE #21—The battle against *Granny Goodness* and her assortment of horrendous henchmen leads *Mr. Miracle* and company to New Genesis in this Steve Englehart/Marshall Rogers/Vince Colletta collaboration.

SGT. ROCK #311—It's another life or death mission for *Rock* and the men of Easy Company courtesy of Bob Kanigher and Frank Redondo. Plus: "A Song for Saigon Sally" by Val Eads and "The Strike" by David Michelinie and Dave Manak.

SUPER FRIENDS #9—The *Super Friends* must find and destroy the last three bombs planted by *Grax*, the super-villain from space or all human life will be destroyed. Don't miss this E. Nelson Bridwell/Ramona Fradon/Bob Smith adventure.

TEEN TITANS #52—It's an all-out blockbuster battle issue as *Titans East* and *West* take on *Mr. Esper*, *Captain Calamity* and each other in "When Titans Clash" by Bob Rozakis, Don Heck and Bob Smith.

AND ON SALE RIGHT NOW:

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GALLERY OF GHOSTS HAUNT 59th ISSUE

(*DC*, New York)—Editor Murray Boltinoff has assembled another collection of true tales of the weird and the supernatural for *GHOSTS #59*, which goes on sale the week of September 12th.

First, you'll read about "The Demon Within Me" by George Kashdan and Rico Rival. Then Kashdan and John Calnan take you on a tour of the Bermuda Triangle in "Satan's Graveyard!" And to round out the issue (in addition to a "Ghosts and the Supernatural" page and a text-tale, "The Boy Who Frightened a Ghost"), Carl Wessler and E.R. Cruz recreate the legend of the "Curse of the Phantom Witch!"

If you don't believe in ghosts, we challenge you to read this issue—and there's some good news for you regular GHOSTS-fans: With this issue, the magazine steps up to monthly publication, meaning there will be even more thrills and chills for you in the future!

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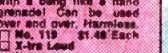

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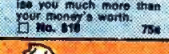

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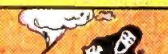

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